

**NHS**  
Northampton General Hospital  
NHS Trust  
Rheumatology  
Cliftonville  
Northampton  
NN1 5BD

Telephone: (01604) 544060  
Option 1: Reception  
Option 2: Nurse Helpline  
Option 3: Secretaries  
email: [rheumatology.helpline@ngh.nhs.uk](mailto:rheumatology.helpline@ngh.nhs.uk)

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Switchboard: (01604) 634700  
[www.northamptongeneral.nhs.uk](http://www.northamptongeneral.nhs.uk)

## **LETTER TO ALL GP SURGERIES** **DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **Re: Patients at Rheumatology, NGH on DMARDs**

Due to overstretched services and the risk of immunocompromised patients being exposed, we have recommended some alterations for blood monitoring for DMARD therapy.

Blood monitoring for patients on stable doses of DMARD's, with no problems and normal or stable bloods, can be extended to a 3 month interval until the Covid-19 situation is clearer. However, this needs to be reviewed on a case by case basis.

If any exceptions, please contact us via email on [rheumatology.helpline@ngh.nhs.uk](mailto:rheumatology.helpline@ngh.nhs.uk)

Patients should continue their DMARD's unless symptomatic with infection, but take self-care precautions to protect themselves, as advised by the Government.

Some patients may choose to stop their DMARD's, if they are concerned or at high risk. But we would **strongly** recommend discussion with their clinician, before making any alterations. If their disease flares and they need steroids to improve things, the patients need to be aware that this can also be immunocompromising and a discussion may be required at that time. Some patients could be at risk of organ damage off treatment and hence it is extremely important that they discuss it with their clinician. This is especially important as we do not know how long the Covid-19 risk will continue.

Further information can be accessed via the British Society of Rheumatology website.

**NOTE TO PATIENT:**

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 situation and difficulties with getting blood monitoring done on time at your GP surgery or the hospital, we advise that if you are on a stable dose of immunosuppressant therapy with no recent changes, your blood tests are usually normal or stable and you are well currently, blood tests could be extended to up to a 3-month gap until the viral pandemic settles.

Please contact your GP or the rheumatology helpline (as above) by email for arrangements regarding your immunosuppressant prescriptions.

If you have concerns regarding being on your medications, please review latest advice on [www.rheumatology.org.uk](http://www.rheumatology.org.uk) and the rheumatology page of NGH website, and contact the rheumatology helpline if you need to discuss further.